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Dysentery 48

Henry E. Shore

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Henry P. Jones

1891 St. Louis, Mo.

# Dysentery.

I come before you Gentlemen, as a candidate for a degree of medicine; I bring with me feelings of no ordinary kind; it is natural to all men when presenting themselves under similar circumstances, before a body so enlightened as yours, to be agitated by the most painful emotions; my embarrassment is considerable. - I am without the benefits of a liberal education and nature has reserved her gifts for some more favourite youth. I throw myself upon your indulgence and hope in your wonted liberality, I have selected for my inaugural dissertation, the subject of Dysentery. - One which has been handled by the most able and sagacious of men, and whose one single argument, would invalidate the very few ideas which I have undertaken to throw together.





It will be perceived that I have rested principally upon the most celebrated Authors. I have incorporated their views into my Thesis.

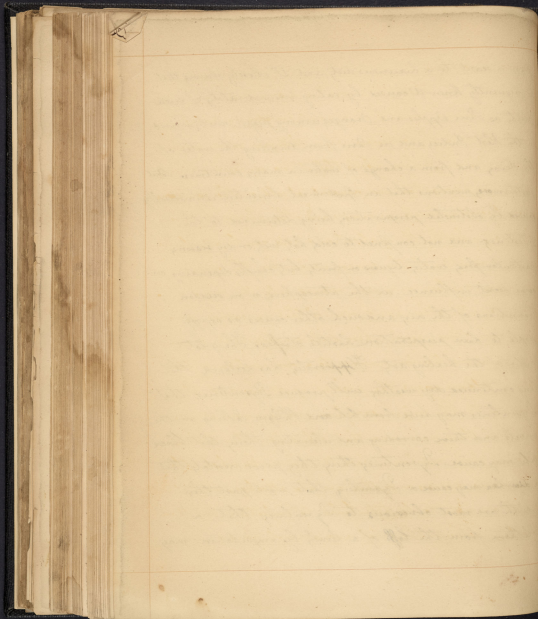
The word Dysentery, imports a difficulty or a disturbance of the functions of the intestines. It is termed by the Latins, *Difficultas Intestinorum*, by some a *Formica*, and by others *Rheumatismus cum ulcere*. Dr Sydenham called it, a fever of its own kind turned inwards upon the bowels. Having gone thus far concerning the definition of the disease of which we are considering, we come now to its more immediate relationship, and first of its

#### Causes.

The causes which give rise to a Dysentery are often cold or moisture, succeeding quickly to intense heat or great droughts, in consequence of which the perspiration is checked and a determination made to the intestines. It has been produced by drinking large draughts of cold water; unwholesome food, wearing damp clothes, a change of living

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from a scant to a luxurious diet, and Dr Mosely observing that  
he frequently knew it caused by eating immoderately of such  
fruits as Pine Apples and Oranges among people newly arrived  
in the West Indies and in Paris from drinking the water of  
the Seine, and from a change of water in many countries. But  
furthermore, mentions that an Epidemical Dysentery is universally  
caused by obstructed perspiration, being determined to the  
intestines - and not confined to cold, hot, wet, or dry seasons,  
particular food, watery liquors or fruits, but chiefly depending on  
some secret influence in the atmosphere, or on sudden  
transitions of the air, and such other causes as expose  
people to have perspiration hastily stopped. The great  
Master of the healing art Hippocrates has declared that  
long continued dry weather will produce Dysenteries, that  
Dysenteries may arise from bile and Phlegm falling on the  
bowels and there corroding and ulcerating them, that black  
bile may cause Dysenteries, that they prove mortal, that  
a diarrhoea may cause a Dysentery, that people past their  
youth are most obnoxious to Dysenteries, that a  
Pleurisy from the loss of a limb by amputation may



cause a Dysentery.

That the Dysentery is sometimes an epidemic disease seems to be a point conceded by many; nevertheless as to its contagious nature there are many warm disputants. Dr. Bullen asserts that it is a contagious disease, and by its propagation independent of cold or other exciting causes becomes epidemic in camps and other places. He is very skeptical whether the application of cold can be attributed to the production of this disease unless when the specific contagion has been previously received into the body. Dr. Osseely on the other hand observes "that in camps and hospitals those people whose dirty employment subjects them in a particular manner to a deprivation of their habits, seldom escape the present epidemic; and this gives rise to the vulgar expression and very incorrect notion of catching the disease and that others from the slightest deviation from regularity lose the power by which the body resists diseases and they are also attacked. But these effects are not to be attributed to infection, for those people who keep the vital and animal powers in



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uniform confederacy, by temperance and calmness of mind, (for fear by lowering the vital energy, subjects the body to disease,) nourishing diet, proper clothing and cleanliness, and by keeping a free and regular ~~passage~~ open for all excretions, are proofs against the assaults of foul and pestilential air. We have frequently entered an apartment where three or four persons lay sick of Dysentery; we have sat by them through the night, have felt the state of the chin, and examined every stool, without the disease being ever taken.

The Dysentery consists in an inflammation of the mucous membrane of the intestines, generally occurring about the latter part of summer and first of autumn, complicated sometimes with the intermittent and remittent fevers, which are frequent autumnal complaints, and <sup>frequently</sup> ushered in by cold shiverings and other marks of fever, though, those only of a topical affection appear first, such as violent Stomach, with or without Sickness; internal heat, languor and frequent small stools;







soon the fever comes on, with an increase of all the symptoms; in some persons there is a burning heat, from <sup>the</sup> Tharynx to the Anus; mucous stools take place, streaked with blood, but sometimes there is more blood than mucus; the natural feces are seldom discharged, and when they do appear, they are usually in the form of small, compact, hard substances, known by the name of Sphacula. As the disease advances the griping becomes more painful and indeed all the symptoms which were apparently mild, now assume a nature more obstinate and severe; for the discharges are small in quantity and very frequent, consisting of a fothy mucus streaked with blood, and at other times of a watery humor, like the washings of meat, which is very acid and highly offensive; the evacuations are sometimes pure blood, and often lumps of compacted mucus are voided. In some instances a mass of matter resembling pus is passed. From the violent efforts which are made, to expel the contents of the intestines, it frequently happens, that a portion of the rectum is forced beyond the verge of the anus, which creates in the course of the disease considerable inconvenience and pain, as



does likewise the Tenesmus, there being a constant desire to go to stool, without being able to discharge any thing except perhaps a little extricated mucus or a small quantity of blood.

As a more correct history of the disease is offered us by Dr. Hillary in his observations on the changes of the air and the concomitant Epidemical diseases in the Island of Barbadoes we beg leave to transcribe it. He says this disease does not always seize the patients in the same manner sometimes it seizes them with a diarrhoea which is moderate the first day or two, but it gradually increases in all its symptoms, till it becomes a perfect dysentery with all its symptoms. At other times it seizes them with an oppression and sickness at their stomachs, a gentle rigour with pain in the head and sometimes all over the body, which are soon followed by a fever, with griping pain in the bowels and frequent griping stools. The sickness at the stomach increases, and is often attended with a retching to vomit or with vomiting, the fever increases, the pulse becomes very quick and generally tense and hard, and



sometimes fully, though rarely so full as it is in most other fevers; neither is the external heat of the body usually so great as it is in many other fevers though the internal heat be great, the stools become more frequent, the griping pain increases, and the excrement discharged is mixed with much mucus of the guts and considerable quantities of blood and sometimes nothing but blood and mucus and discharged by stool at other times a bloody sanies or ichor like bloody beef broth, and a tenesmus comes on with a continual painful needness, or desire of going to stool; all these symptoms continue and increase, if not timely relieved by proper remedies, the fever increases, the pulse is very quick, the thirst and internal heat great though the external heat though ~~the external heat~~ continues to be less than in most other fevers, as all the fluids have so great an afflux towards the bowels, which too often deceives the injudicious or incautious practitioner. Now the patients strength sinks, he grows delirious, his extreme parts cold, accompanied with cold clammy sweat, his pulse becomes irregular,



unequal and often intermits, the stools sometimes run from the patient insensibly, the coldness of the extremities, and the cold sweats increase, and all the other symptoms are worse, the pulse grows very faint, and a mortification seizes the bowels, which soon ends in death.

The Prognostics are unfavourable when there is a violent irritation of the whole primæ viæ with great prostration of strength, stranguary, fetid and involuntary discharges, very great degree of tenesmus, a tense abdomen, violent fever or cold clammy sweat, coldness of the extremities, stupor, apathy, hiccup, petechiæ, and a weak irregular pulse. On the contrary, a remission of fever, a diminution of pain, with a gentle, universal diaphoresis, the evacuations becoming more natural, and less frequent, are favourable appearances.

The Diagnostic symptoms between Dysentery and diarrhoea, are the absence of fever and tenesmus in the latter, and the stools in diarrhoea are frequent,







with copious discharges of feculent matter without blood.

On dissecting those in whom Dysentery has proved fatal, the internal coats of the intestines, particularly the colon and rectum, are found in a high degree of inflammation, with suppuration, ulceration, contraction &c. The Peritonæum, Omentum, and Mesentery, as likewise an inflammatory appearance

Believing Dysentery to be an inflammation of the lower intestines and more especially of their interior coat; and that their healthy peristaltic motion is interrupted in such way as to impede the excretion of the natural Faeces, and being evident that the determination of blood to the part is in undue quantity. The indications of cure which present themselves seem to be first to reduce inflammation; secondly to procure a free discharge from the bowels, and thirdly to determine the fluids to the surface of the body.

Happily for mankind the Pathology of this

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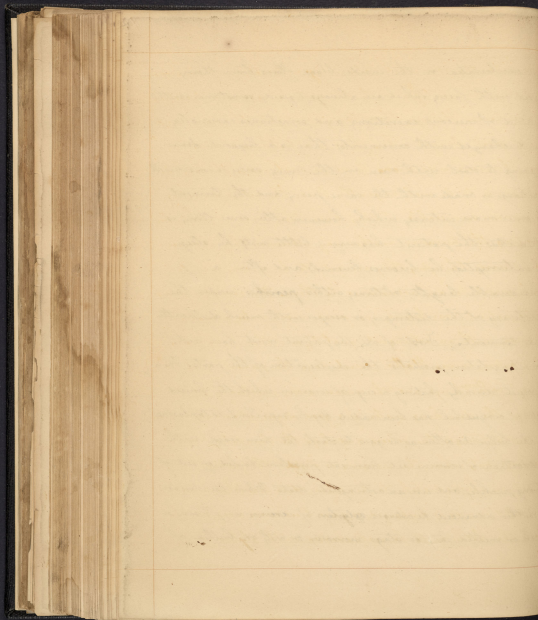
disease is better understood than was formerly as is manifested by the treatment instituted by the ancients; they being content to combat subordinate symptoms while their more enlightened posterity, amid the clamour of applause, attempted with diligence and zeal a research more fortunate.

Hippocrates advised for the disease in question, warm fomentations to be applied to the belly, when the pains <sup>arise</sup> and to give glysters of milk, and when there is fever, to use emollient and unctuous glysters often, to discharge the sharp humours. Milk was the general medicine in the dysentery, <sup>either</sup> milk, goats milk, or cows milk; sometimes he gave crude milk, sometimes boiled milk, and sometimes milk with hot stones quenched in it. He admonishes against the propriety of giving milk, when there is any pain in the head, and when there is fever and thirst, and when there is a copious discharge of blood, or a <sup>bloody</sup> purging with an acute fever.

Belous says among the diseases of the intestines may be reckoned the <sup>Typhus</sup> ~~Typhus~~; in this disorder the intestines

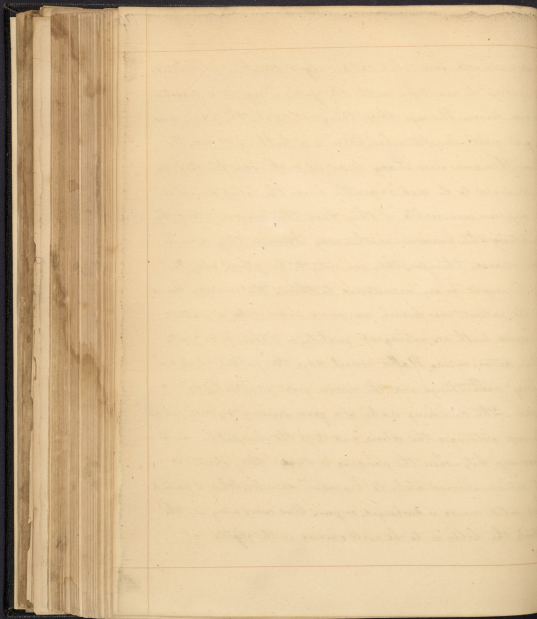


are excoriated on the inside; blood flows from them, mixed with faeces which are always liquid, sometimes with a kind of mucous excretion, and sometimes caruncles are discharged with excrement; there is a frequent desire of going to stool with pain in the anus; some inconsiderable discharge is made with the same pain, and the torment becomes more intense, which, however after some time, is alleviated; the patient has very a little rest; his sleep is interrupted; he becomes feverish; and after a considerable length of time, either perishes under the insupportability of the distemper, or escapes with much difficulty and torment. First of all the patient must have rest; for all agitation promotes the excoriation of the parts. Then he must drink, fasting a cup of wine in which the bruised root of cinquefoil has been added. Apply repellent cataplasms to the belly. As often as he goes to stool let him wash with a decoction of vervain let him eat pears boiled, or out of strong pickle, and use an astringent diet. When the disease is farther advanced, he advises glysters of cream of ptisan, or milk, or melted fat, or stags marrow, or oil, or butter of



rose, with the raw white of an egg or decoction of linseed,  
 or if sleep be wanting, with the yolks of eggs in a decoction  
 of rose-leaves. He says, these things mitigate the pain, and  
 are of great benefit when there is a loathing of food. He  
 says, Thomson used strong brine in such cases. The food, he  
 mentions, is to be such as gently binds the belly; diarrhoea  
 he supposes unvermiable if they have their proper effect, by  
 diverting the humours another way, otherwise they increase  
 the disease; therefore, they are not to be given, only to  
 such people as are accustomed to them. His common drink  
 if the patient was febrile, was pure warm water, or water  
 enervated with an astringent quality; or if there be no fever,  
 thin, astringent wines. If, after several days, the patient find no  
 relief from <sup>these</sup> things, and the disease grows inveterate, he  
 advises the drinking water of a good degree of coldness which  
 he says astringes the vessels, and lays the foundation for a  
 recovery; but when the purging is stopped, the patient is  
 to return immediately to his warm drinks. When a putrid  
 and fetid sanies is discharged, or pure blood comes away in the  
 stools, the belly is to be well cleansed with glysters of

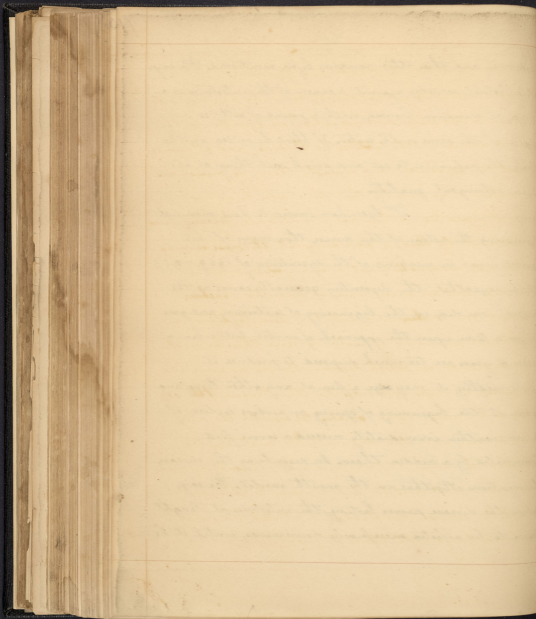






hydromel, and these other remedies before mentioned. He says an effectual remedy against a cancer of the intestines is a lump of minium bruised with a pound of salt; or a glyster of the same with water. If blood be voided in the stools, the patient is to eat and drink such things as are of an astringent quality.

Dr Sydenham seemed to have more light concerning the nature of this disease than many of his predecessors; - in speaking of the dysentery of 1669, 70, 71, 72, he says, that the dysentery generally comes as the present one did, in the beginning of autumn, and goes off for a time upon the approach of winter; but when a series of years are too much disposed to produce it epidemically, it may seize a few at any other time, and many at the beginning of spring, or perhaps earlier, if warm weather immediately succeed a severe frost terminated by a sudden thaw. In describing the disease, he mentions Aphthae in the mouth mortal. He says, when the disease proves lasting, the intestines at length seem to be affected successively downwards, until it is

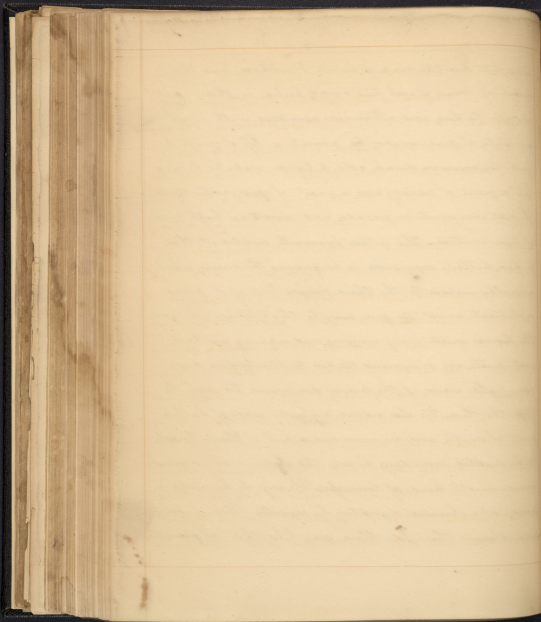


driven to the rectum, and ends in a *tenesmus*.

He says, the curative indications are, to make an immediate division of the sharp humours which are deposited by the meseric arteries in the intestines, by bleeding; and afterwards to cool the remainder, and evacuate them by purgatives. He mentions it is probable that there may be as many species of dysentery, as there are of small-pox. He commenced his treatment by bleeding, gave an opiate the same evening, and the next morning his usual purging potion, which is Tamarind, half an ounce; leaves of Senna two drachms Rhubarb, one drachm and a half; boil them together in a sufficient quantity of water, to leave three ounces of strained liquor, in which dissolve Mannan, an ounce, and add syrup of Roses, an ounce. In the afternoon of the day he followed his purge by an opiate. He repeated the purge twice or more every other day, with the opiate on the intermediate days. Briefly in aged and phlegmatic persons, after the application of his first remedies, he gave some mild cordials. The common drink which he allowed his patients was, milk boiled with three its quantity of water; or

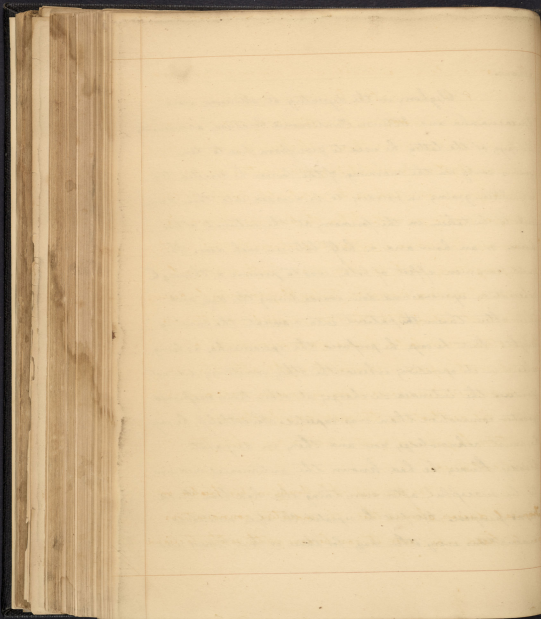
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the white decoction made of burnt Flaxshew, and the  
 crust of bread, of each two ounces; boiled in three pints  
 of water to two, and afterwards sweetened with a sufficient  
 quantity of fine sugar; to prevent a loss of spirits he  
 gave for common drink, cold; a liquor made by boiling  
 half a pint of Canary and a quart of spring water together.  
 The diet was sometimes panada, and sometimes both made  
 of lean mutton. This method he remarks, succeeded all those  
 he has hitherto experienced in conquering the disease, which  
 generally yielded to the third purge. But if it proved  
 so obstinate as not to give way to this treatment, he gave  
 the former opiate every morning and evening, untill it  
 went quite off; or increased the dose to twenty-five drops  
 every eight hours, if the former dose proved too weak to  
 stop the flux. He also ordered a glyster made of half a  
 pint of milk, and an ounce and a half of Venice Treacle  
 to be injected every day; he says this glyster is an admirable  
 remedy in all kinds of loosemesses. He says he has cured a  
 person of a chronical dysentery by repeated bleedings only;  
 and observes that her blood was like that of pleuritic



persons.

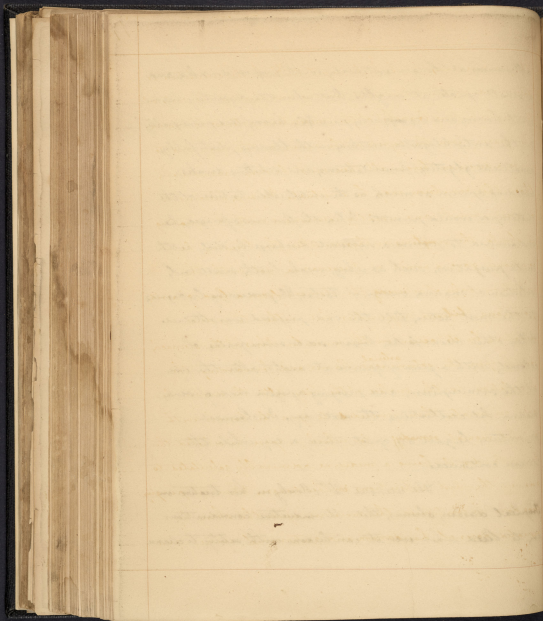
Bligham, in the dysentery at Ollinoreg, used  
*Ipecacuanha* and *Utrum Oculis moris Beratum*, as evacuates.  
 He says, of the latter, he used to give from five to ten  
 grains early in the morning; of the former he directed ten  
 or fifteen grains, in powder, to be divided into three doses,  
 and to be taken in the forenoon, at the interval of two  
 hours, or an hour and a half between each dose. The  
 most common effect of both, was to procure a thorough  
 evacuation upwards and downwards, during the day, and  
 they often threw the patient into a sweat the ensuing  
 night. But he says, he preferred the *ipecacuanha* as being  
 certain in its operation, whereas the other sometimes did not  
 produce the intended discharge; at other times occasioned  
 greater commotion than was expected. Nevertheless, he says,  
 he must acknowledge, now and then, in desperate  
 bloody fluxes, he had known the antimonial medicine  
 to be successful, after every thing else had been tried  
 to no purpose. At first he repeated the above mentioned  
 evacuations every other day, for three or four times; and



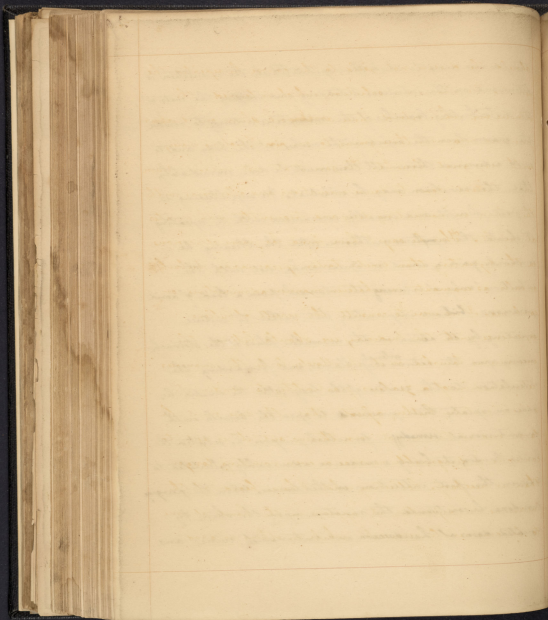


afterwards at longer intervals, with proper drinks, and a small opiate at night. But when the dysentery began with hoarse and rigorous fever, &c. he confided principally in the antiphlogistic method, with bleeding plentifully, emollient glysters, fomentations, and diluting drinks; avoiding opium as much as the intolerable torture of the distemper would permit. When the fever was abated, he endeavoured to procure a sufficient discharge by stool, with mild purgatives, such as whey, weak broth, sweet oil, solution of manna, cream of tartar &c. proceeding by degrees to the most acting, till the end proposed was obtained. When other means failed, he gave six or seven grains of calomel, with a grain of opium at night, after the use of the semicupium, and purging apozem made of sena, manna, sal catharticus the next day. In chronic dysenteries he gave an opiate twice a day while the disease continued.

The celebrated Dr Mosely, in his treatise on Tropical diseases, observes, that the judicious considerations are to bleed when ever it can be done with safety, to cleanse



the prime way to check the impetus <sup>with</sup> which the circulation is determined on the intestines, distending and bursting the coats of the distributing branches of the mesenteric arteries; to remove the spasm from the vessels of the surface of the body, and to cause a diversion thence - all these must be done immediately, that the revulsion may be effectual. He says bleeding is of great benefit and usually commenced with its repeating it should the symptoms authorize. After the bleeding he commonly gave a vomit of Ipecacuanha; not with the intention only of relieving the stomach from a load of acid, viscid, bilious impurities; but rather to induce sweating by its action on the muscular fibres of the stomach, forcing open the extreme <sup>arterial</sup> capillaries; and forwarding the circulation to the surface of the body. After the emetic he gave an opiate, then proceeded to open the bowels with an antimonial ~~remedy~~ for which purpose, he selected the Larrea Purging it being a medicine admirably calculated to answer the first intentions in this disease. When the purging was done he continued the moisture upon the skin by repeated doses of Laudanum and antimonial wine; and



should the disease not yield to this course, he repeated the vomits. He also used a solution, which is termed the enteric viz; white stirred three drachms alum one drachm powdered bocheical three grains, to one pint of boiling water, with very great benefit. He gave it at first without alum in sufficient doses to cause evacuation, and afterwards with the alum in nauseating doses and frequently with opiate at night. This he says, I have found far more efficacious in the dysentery than emetic tartar, ipecacuanha, rhubarb or castor as evacuants in whatever manner administered or combined. If we were to consult the result of Bullens experience with the medicine we should believe the encomiums lavished on it by others, to be the erroneous determination of a zealous partiality to render its effects certain. Bullen asserts that the dose must be large, and if this is not soon thrown out, it is apt to continue a disagreeable nausea or even vomiting, longer than is necessary. Collecting what I have heard of the medicine in dysentery, it appears in the hands of some to be eminently serviceable, while in others no good.



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effects could be observed.

That bleeding is sometimes essential at the commencement of a dysentery is a point acceded to by many; and that a repetition of the remedy may be necessary is also acknowledged. It reduces the high degree of inflammation, induces perspiration and renders the system more susceptible of the impressions of its auxiliaries: in some cases blood must be drawn to a very considerable amount.

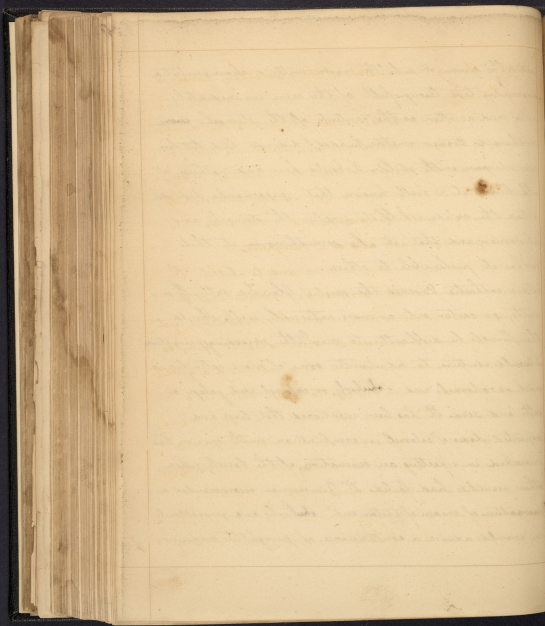
After the bleeding with a view to remove any morbid contents of the stomach, as also to determine the fluids to the surface of the body, an emetic will be adviseably either accompanied or soon followed by a cathartic. If an emetic be exhibited alone, some think the tartar emetic most suitable; yet there are cases which we believe call loudly for the ipecacuanha. Dr Zimmerman speaks of ipecacuanha as his only emetic, he gave forty grains with the quantity diminished in proportion to the age and other circumstances of the patient; by it he effected his principal indication of cure which was the quick evacuation of corrupt bilious matter; the emetic was



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usually given in a little warm water or chamomile tea, drinking two teacupfull of the same immediately after, and as often as the contents of the stomach were discharged. Stronger emetics he adds I did not find fit for my purpose, with milder I should have done, nothing at all; besides it is well known that ipecacuanha does not relax the solids, while it empties the stomach and abdomen; and that it has something in it that makes it preferable to others.

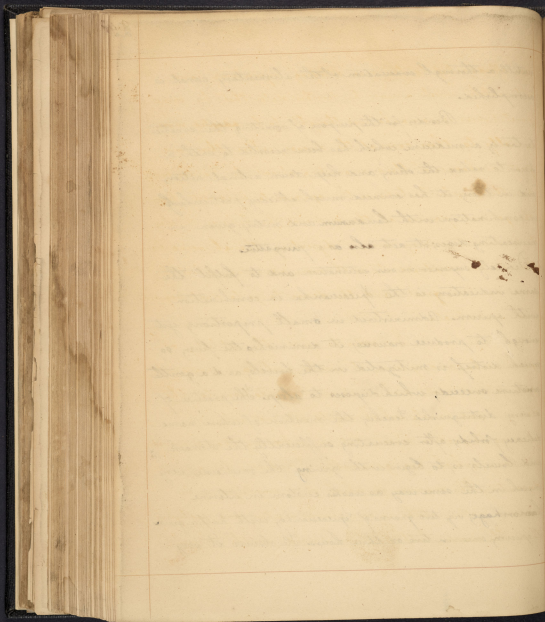
As a cathartic I succeed the emetic Glauber's salt, Croton salt, or castor oil answers extremely well. Should the bowels be difficult to move after the preceding purgatives I would venture to administer some of more activity; such as calomel and rhubarb, or calomel and jalap, or castor and senna. It has been mentioned that large and repeated doses of calomel in combination with opium has succeeded in effecting an evacuation of the bowels, when other remedies had failed. Dr Zimmerman recommended a purgative of cream of tartar and rhubarb as a general rule we would advise a continuance of purgative medicines,



untill a thorough evacuation of the alimentary canal is accomplished.

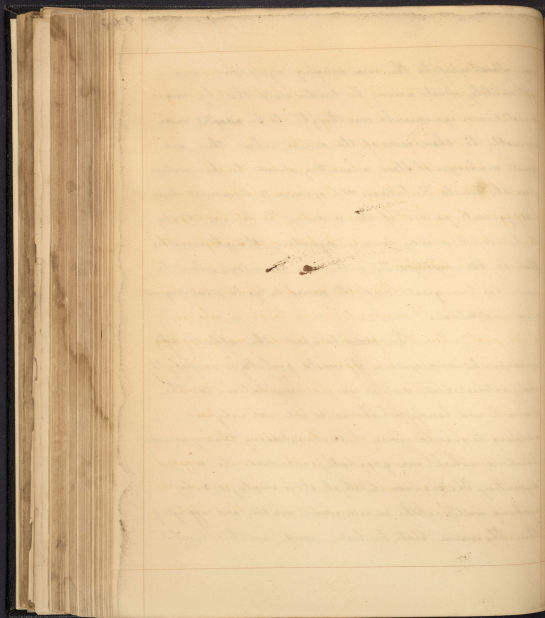
Besides for the purpose of vomiting, the emetic tartar is a medium which has been resorted to with a view to relax the skin and keep down arterial action, and in this it has evinced much efficacy particularly in combination with laudanum and nitre; given in nauseating doses; it acts also as a purgative.

Decidedly superior in our estimation and to fulfil the same indication is the Ipecacuanha in combination with opium. Administered in small proportions, yet enough to produce nausea; it diminishes the fever, so much distress is mitigated in the bowels, and a gentle moisture succeeds which disposes to sleep. The practice of a very distinguished Teacher, the mention of whose name delicately forbids; after evacuating sufficiently the stomach and bowels; is to begin with giving the medicine very much in the same way as usages custom in uterine haemorrhage; viz. two grains of Ipecacuanha, with half a grain of opium, once in two or three hours. He observes it very



soon affords relief to the more distressing symptoms, and ultimately effects a cure; he further states that, by some practitioners ipecacuanha was thought to be adapted more especially to those cases of the disease, where there are great discharges of blood, amounting almost to hæmorrhage from the bowels. He believes this opinion to be correct from the general powers of the medicine; he believes it also to be useful in every form of dysentery, though remarking that he has employed it with more advantage where the pain has been great and the desire to go to stool frequent and ineffectual.

In order to assist the effect of ipecacuanha and opium, it would probably be necessary to apply external heat, such as warm fomentations to the stomach and bowels, which would act not only in assisting to produce sweat, but in subduing those spasmodic affections, which are generally incident to a dysentery. The manner in which it is employed, is by soaking wollen cloths in very warm water and applying them. The warm bath has been used with benefit

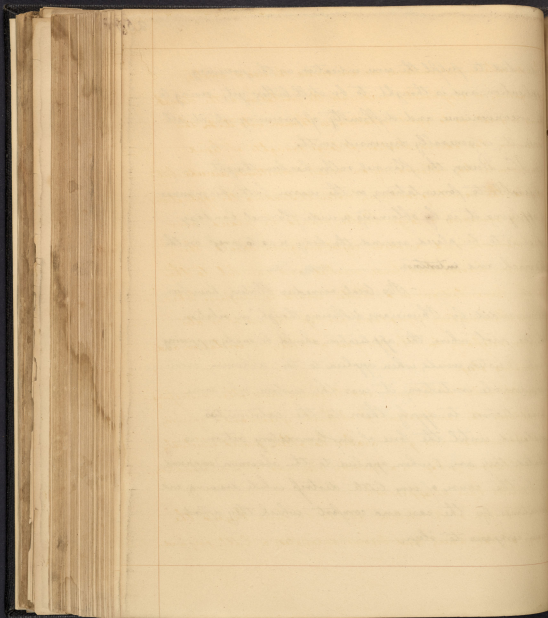




and indeed to fulfil the same indication as the preceding application, and is thought to be still better, yet, owing to the inconvenience and difficulty of procuring it at all times, it is generally dispensed with.

By Dr. Dever, the flannel roller has been thought preferable to fomentations, or the warm bath; his manner of applying it is, by obtaining a wide flannel bandage, which is to be placed around the body, so as to press on the stomach and intestines.

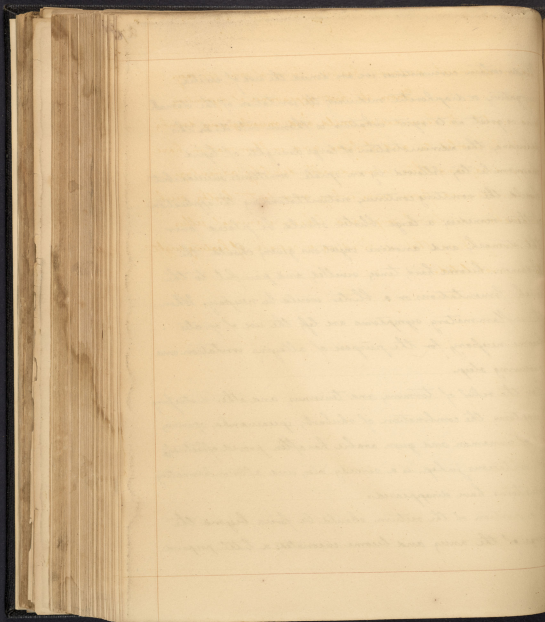
- His local remedies blisters, have been recommended by Physicians, differing though, in relation to the part where the application should be made; supposing that blisters would, when applied to the abdomen create considerable irritation, it was the custom of some practitioners to apply them to the extremities. Delayed until the force of inflammatory action is abated they are (when applied to the abdomen) supposed, to be the cause of very little distress while drawing, and sometimes by the ease and comfort which they afford even compose to sleep.



Under certain circumstances we are denied the use of emetics, purgative, or diaphoretic medicines; the irritation of the stomach being so great as to reject whatever is thrown into it. In this dilemma, the administration of large draughts of tepid chamomile tea, followed by an opiate sometimes succeeds: but should the vomiting continue, notwithstanding the application of these remedies; a large blister should be placed over the stomach, and anodine injections given; should the abdomen become hard, tense, swelled, and painful to the touch, fomentations or a blister would be necessary. When the inflammatory symptoms are left the use of opiates become necessary for the purpose of allaying irritation and procuring sleep.

For the relief of tormina, and tenismus, and other distressing symptoms, the combination of rhubarb, ipecacuanha, opium, oil of cinnamon and gum arabic has often proved effective. The cretaceous julap is a remedy also, used after inflammatory symptoms have disappeared.

If a portion of the rectum should be forced beyond the verge of the anus and become excoriated; a little prepared



lard, or oporomaceti ointment, has been found of some efficacy.

From the first appearance of dysentery, and until its termination, mild and mucilaginous drinks should be resorted to; and if fever and inflammation have disappeared, and there is considerable debility advantage has been derived from wine whey and light broths such as chicken or lamb soup, and likewise animal jellies but every thing that is binding or capable of heating ought to be prohibited.

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